

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

IRIS RENTERIA,

Plaintiff,

v.

LAND O'LAKES, INC.,

Defendant.

Case No. 1:25-cv-00043 JLT SAB

ORDER ADOPTING FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS AND
REMANDING ACTION TO TULARE
COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

(Docs. 5, 17, 27, 28, 31)

On January 16, 2025, Defendant Land O'Lakes, Inc. filed a motion to dismiss Plaintiff Iris Renteria's complaint pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6).¹ (Doc. 6.) On February 10, 2025, Plaintiff filed a motion to remand this action to Tulare County Superior Court, arguing, in part, that she lacks Article III standing because her sole claim is for public injunctive relief to remedy a public wrong rather than Plaintiff's individual injury.² (Doc. 17.) On May 12, 2025, the magistrate judge issued Findings and Recommendations finding that Plaintiff's requested relief does not constitute public injunctive relief but nonetheless recommending that Plaintiff's motion

¹ Defendant also filed, on January 16, 2025, a motion to transfer venue. (Doc.. 5.) Defendant withdrew the motion at a hearing held by the assigned magistrate judge on April 9, 2025. (See Doc. 27.)

² Plaintiff also argues the amount in controversy in this injunctive relief action does not exceed \$75,000. Because the magistrate judge found Plaintiff lacks Article III standing, the parties' dispute regarding the amount in controversy was not addressed.

1 to remand be granted because Plaintiff does not otherwise allege that she has Article III standing.
2 (Doc. 27.)

3 The Court served the Findings and Recommendations on the parties and notified them
4 that any objections were due within 14 days. (Doc. 27 at 14.) On May 27, 2025, Plaintiff filed
5 objections to the magistrate judge’s reasoning related to the motion to remand. (Doc. 28.) On
6 June 6, 2025, Defendant filed a response to Plaintiff’s objections. (Doc 31.) According to 28
7 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C), this Court performed a *de novo* review of this case. Having carefully
8 reviewed the matter, the Court concludes the Findings and Recommendations are supported by
9 the record and proper analysis.

10 Plaintiff objects to the Findings and Recommendations on two grounds, neither of which
11 are persuasive. First, she contends (Doc. 28 at 3–4) that the magistrate judge erroneously
12 narrowed the nature of the requested injunction from one that would preclude Defendant from
13 including and/or attempting to enforce a non-solicitation provision in “the contacts of their
14 California employees *in the future*” (Doc. 1-4 (Complaint) at ¶ 15 (emphasis added)), to one that
15 would preclude Defendant from “potential *future* enforcement of non-solicitation provisions
16 contained in *former and current* employees’ contracts.” (See Doc. 27 at 10 (emphasis added).)
17 Though the magistrate judge rephrased the requested injunctive relief, the Court agrees with
18 Defendant (*see* Doc. 31 at 3–4) that the description is accurately derived from the record. There
19 was no erroneous narrowing or any material misunderstanding of the nature of the injunctive
20 relief requested.

21 Second, Plaintiff complains that the magistrate judge “erred” by “requiring” public
22 injunctive relief to benefit the general public in “equal shares.” (Doc. 28 at 4.) The relevant
23 discussion in the Findings and Recommendations is as follows:

24 Plaintiff argues that “[b]y requiring Defendant to notify its current
25 and former employees that the non-solicitation provision in their
26 contracts is void and prohibiting Defendant from including
27 unlawful non-solicitation provisions...in its contracts in the future,
28 Plaintiff’s requested injunctions benefit the entire California
population by removing barriers to economic development,
innovation, and growth.” (ECF No. 24 at 6.) The Court does not
doubt the public has an interest in these broad-brush principles.
Plaintiff, however, conflates the magnitude of her averred public

1 interest with the manner in which a public injunction benefits the
 2 general public in equal shares. [*Rogers v. Lyft, Inc.*, 452 F. Supp.
 3d 904, 921 (N.D. Cal., April 7, 2020)] (contrasting relief
 4 requesting that Lyft reclassify its drivers from independent
 5 contractors to employees, which affects drivers only, with an
 6 injunction that enjoins false advertising or deceptive labeling,
 7 which could trick any member of the public). Plaintiff's averred
 8 benefit to the public—removing Defendant's alleged barrier to
 9 economic development, innovation, and growth by enjoining it
 10 from enforcing the non-solicitation provision—is, at best,
 11 collateral to the benefit to Defendant's current and former
 12 employees whose contracts contain the non-solicitation provision.
 13 See *Clifford [v. Quest Software Inc.]*, 38 Cal. App. 5th [745,] 754-
 14 55 [(2019)](explaining that although “[t]he public certainly has an
 15 interest in securing an employer's compliance with wage and hour
 16 laws,” such interest to the public does not transform a private UCL
 17 injunctive relief claim to a public one). That the general public
 18 may incidentally benefit from enjoining Defendant from enforcing
 19 its non-solicitation provision against its former and current
 20 employees is insufficient to classify such relief as public injunctive
 21 relief. Accordingly, the Court finds Plaintiff's requested injunctive
 22 relief to notify Defendant's current and former employees that the
 23 non-solicitation provision in their employment contracts is void
 24 and enjoining Defendant from enforcing that provision does not
 25 constitute public injunctive relief.

26 (Doc. 27 at 10–11.) Both Plaintiff and Defendant agree that the cited language from *Rogers* is
 27 dicta. (See Doc. 28 at 5; Doc. 31 at 5.) Plaintiff argues that Rodgers “cannot be relied on” for this
 28 issue because dicta is “non-binding.” (Doc. 27 at 5 (citing *Nat'l Collegiate Athletic Assn. v.
*Alston**, 594 U.S. 69, 93 (2021).) Notwithstanding that there is authority suggesting a lower court
 2 may consider dicta of a higher court to be persuasive authority, see *Valladolid v. Pac. Operations
*Offshore, LLP**, 604 F.3d 1126, 1131 (9th Cir. 2010), *aff'd and remanded sub nom. Pac.
*Operators Offshore, LLP v. Valladolid**, 565 U.S. 207 (2012), the Court agrees with Defendant
 3 that the outcome would not change even if the magistrate judge's discussion of *Rogers* is entirely
 4 disregarded. This is because the Findings and Recommendations did not rely exclusively on
 5 *Rogers*. Rather, it cited *Clifford* for the more general proposition that even though the public may
 6 incidentally benefit from enjoining an unlawful employment practice, such benefit is insufficient
 7 to classify the requested relief as seeking a public injunction. Both the reasoning and the ultimate
 8 conclusions of the Findings and Recommendations are therefore sound. Thus, the Court

29 ORDERS:

- 30 1. The findings and recommendations (Doc. 27) dated May 12, 2025, are

1 **ADOPTED** in full.

- 2 2. Plaintiff's motion to remand (Doc. 17) is **GRANTED**.
3 3. Defendant's motion to dismiss (Doc. 6) is **DENIED** as moot.
4 4. This action is **REMANDED** to the Tulare County Superior Court.
5 5. The Clerk of Court is directed to close this case.

6
7 IT IS SO ORDERED.

8 Dated: June 12, 2025


UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE